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LATIN WITHOUT TEARS

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Slowly but convincingly there has been forced upon thinking teachers the belief that some defects may exist in the traditional method of Latin instruction. This is indicated by the tendency of pupils to drop out of first- and second-year classes, by the appalling number of pupils who fail on sight translation in college-entrance papers, by the constant and merciless criticisms by college instructors of the results attained after the completion of the secondary-school course, by a lack of independent effort, and a tendency to dishonesty shown by a great number of pupils.

It is the purpose of this article to describe a method which has been used for several years by several schools with apparently good results. It involves the application to the teaching of Latin of some underlying principles of psychology and pedagogy.

The method frankly concedes that educational practices which were well suited to conditions fifty years ago are out of harmony with present-day needs. It recognizes that an enormous amount of time and energy has been spent in needless and useless thumbing of the leaves of the vocabulary; that so much energy has been expended on words, that little surplus has remained for thought-getting. It asserts that the means has been so magnified as almost to obscure the end in view, that syntax has often seemed the only pretext for studying Latin. It minimizes the chance for dishonesty which in prepared lessons is shown by the improper use of literal translations and by the practice of many pupils of having their lessons read to them by the brighter members of the class. So flagrant have these evils become that the traditional method in some schools actually stimulates such a tendency to dishonesty that many pupils would be better equipped for life if they did not study Latin at all.

A large number of experiments conducted during the past ten years by competent psychologists has demonstrated the fallacy of the once generally accepted doctrine of formal mental discipline, with unlimited transfer of training. Since the principle now seems to be well established that no such general mental discipline exists, if Latin had no other justification than as a means of mental discipline its presence in a school curriculum would be defended by few scholars who have studied modern educational progress.

Fortunately for those who are fond of Latin, values are assigned to the subject for very different reasons.

To give to pupils the power to read Latin is the chief reason for its study advanced by the advocates of the method under discussion. Since the way to learn to do anything is to do it, pupils are taught to read Latin by reading Latin.¹ Because honest, independent, careful work can best be insisted upon when the advance translation is done under the instructor's eye, sight reading is particularly emphasized.

Some of the characteristics of the method are: (1) learning to read by reading; (2) the imparting of life and enthusiasm to class and teacher; (3) the use of four channels of memory—visual, auditory, vocal, and manual; (4) increased speed through mastery of forms; (5) avoidance of fatigue, because of variety in work; (6) efficiency in drill; (7) stimulus to independent work and honesty.

The first year recitation generally consists of: (1) drill on forms; (2) correction on blackboard in class of Latin sentences, written by pupils outside of classroom; (3) teaching exercise; (4) sight translation; (5) drill on new words; (6) writing by class of words, idioms, phrases, and simple sentences on blackboard and paper.

Quick-perception cards are used for classroom drill on vocabulary and word forms. The Latin form of the word is printed in inch type.² On the upper right corner of the reverse side of the card the word is written so that the instructor may instantly verify the work of the class.

¹ It will be observed that both this method and the direct method consider ability to read Latin of chief value; the former emphasizes reading in the form of translation, the latter in the form of the language itself.

² A hand rubber-stamping outfit does the work satisfactorily.

In secondary-school work the quick-perception card has been in use a comparatively short time, although it is a primary-school device which has long been approved, because of the correct psychological principle upon which its use is founded and because of the splendid results which have attended it. Its use in Latin as a method of drill on all word forms and idioms, displacing the giving of declensions and conjugations, is showing results which justify its use by teachers of Latin. As success in its use depends almost wholly upon the speed with which it is handled, careful attention and much practice should be given to it. Since an instantaneous, clear-cut image with the least possible movement is the most satisfactory and offers least danger from eyestrain, the following seems as safe as any of the several ways of exposing the cards.

An extension about 18 inches in height above the teacher's desk is used, having the front and sides closed so as to prevent the pupil from seeing the cards as they fall after being exposed. Unnecessary fatigue is thus avoided. A projection of a half-inch at the top of the extension toward the pupils prevents the cards from sliding forward. Rubber tips for the index finger of the left hand and thumb of the right hand are of assistance.

The cards are first placed face downward; each card in turn is pushed slightly toward the right by the index finger of the left hand to enable the teacher more easily to grasp it with the right hand. It is then tilted to a vertical position and instantly dropped from sight behind the extension.

For practice in pronunciation the card is exposed for an instant and the pupils pronounce after the instructor the Latin forms

When the meanings of words are learned, a new card is held while the class gives one or more repetitions of the English meanings. After the cards have all been shown, the process is repeated. They are again exposed while the class gives each English meaning once. The latter process is repeated as many times as is necessary. On succeeding days the cards are exposed while the class gives each English meaning once. No greater number of cards is used than can be handled in three minutes. Whenever new ones are added, an equal number of old cards is removed. Occasional reviews of

old cards are given. Since psychology is proving by experiment that speed and efficiency are inseparable, the maximum of speed and concentration must be insisted upon, but it is essential to continue the work for only three or four minutes. If desired, this form of drill may precede, accompany, and follow the other work in each recitation.

Visual, vocal, and auditory forms of memory are cultivated by this drill. The latter form probably is particularly strengthened by the volume of sound that comes from unison work, but great caution should be used to limit the amount of concert work so as to prevent any possibility of having a few pupils do practically all the work. Calling for volunteer work by a show of hands is excellent as a means of counteracting this tendency. Calling upon individuals and groups of pupils is effective. When an individual fails to respond instantly with the right meaning, alertness is enhanced if the teacher says "class!" and the whole class gives the correct word.

For drill as a substitute for the giving of declensions and conjugations, the base or stem of the word is printed on cards $11 \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ inches so as to leave a blank space of $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the extreme right of the cards. Endings are printed on cards $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length and are so held as exactly to cover the blank space on the cards having base or stem and in a position to be seen both by teacher and pupils. Rapid-fire drill is given by removing with the thumb of the right hand the cards containing endings. It is obvious that with verbs of the first and second conjugations, the endings for the present, imperfect, and future active and passive, may be handled together.

Among the small cards marked with endings, several of each form should be used to insure continuous drill.

The class is told the name of each case but no emphasis is placed on case. Stress is laid on the meanings of cases. *Rōmae* does not suggest to the pupil genitive, dative, or locative, but to him it means: of, to or for, at, Rome, and he selects the meaning that the context requires; *silvae* means: of the forest, to or for the forest, the forests, subject; *amīci* means: of the friend, the friends, subject; *exercitūs* means: of the army, the armies, subject and

object. If it does not seem practical to give all the possible meanings for some of the cases, enough can be given to insure ability to supply from the context the other necessary meanings. The habit of thinking in terms of the English equivalent without first determining the form by its case, sufficiently short-circuits the mental process to increase speed and efficiency in translation.

New words always make their first appearance in selections for translation so that pupils may acquire the habit of striving to gain the thought from the printed page by using words only as means to the end in view.

On the same day that words first appear they are given to the class after the translation exercise on the class-perception cards and also placed on the board in the study room for the pupils to copy on small cards for individual practice outside of class. The Latin form is placed on one side with the English meanings on the reverse side. Pupils are instructed to handle cards as rapidly as possible, placing at one side any cards of which the meanings do not instantaneously suggest themselves. These are later studied until mastered. After a short time pupils can handle a hundred or more cards in a minute. For individual cards as well as for class cards speed is emphasized as all important.

Pupils are urged to practice with cards several times daily for not longer than three minutes continuously. Outside daily preparation consists of the use of cards and the writing of three or four English-Latin sentences which are passed to the instructor in a notebook, and on the following day corrected on the blackboard in the classroom. Writing on the board and on paper gives opportunity for the formation of motor images, an essential factor in efficient recall. Independent work at the board is aided by having alternate pupils write different forms, idioms, phrases, and sentences.

Sight translation during the first half of the first year is upon Latin written each day by the instructor. In this way emphasis is given to any feature desired by providing material having a large number of repetitions. An attempt is made to have in each day's work a story or at least some connection between each sentence and the one following, so as to cultivate in pupils the habit of referring sentences to the context in which they are found.

Easy Latin like *Fabulae faciles* is given to the class for sight translation the first year. In subsequent years pupils in class are given training (1) in rapidly getting the thought from a quarter- or half-page, (2) telling the thought in their own words, (3) translating.

Pupils also read a considerable amount outside the classroom and report upon the story.¹ Occasionally selections are re-read in class; frequently consideration is given only to the difficulties which pupils experience in translation.

As the limits of this article do not allow space for detailed consideration of each point in the method, the use of cards has been most fully described, as in this particular it differs from other methods. The use of cards is, however, but one of the means to the end—ability to get thought from the printed page.

A part or all of the features may be used by any instructor.

The method gives opportunity for as much oral work as individual instructors wish, and for formal grammar near the end of the course to satisfy college requirements.

It is essential that reading shall begin in advance of grammatical and syntactical study, that the concrete shall precede the abstract; therefore the place of grammar is at the end and not at the beginning of the course. Grammar is actually learned through reading and writing so that the final process is merely one of arrangement and tabulation.

The general procedure follows the practices which obtain in modern teaching of pupils to read English. Reading is from first to last the chief feature. That an opportunity is given for the individuality of an instructor to make itself felt is shown by the variations in method in the different schools where it is employed. The outline that has been given in this article refers to the work that is done by the writer in Robinson Seminary, Exeter, New Hampshire.

The mortality rate at the end of the first and second years is reduced to a minimum. In the writer's class of thirty-eight, two failed on first-year work, one failed in each of the two succeeding

¹ *Fabulae faciles*, *Via Latina*, *Viri Romae*, Eutropius, Nepos, and selections from Caesar are so used.

years. The number of students now taking Latin in college after being trained by this method is too small to warrant any positive conclusions, though they are all ranking as high in Latin as in any other subject, and, in some instances, higher than in any other subject.

The results now attained seem to justify the hope that the method can command from pupils sufficient attention, can create in them sufficient interest, can give to them sufficient grasp of the subject to save Latin from the lamentable fate which Greek has suffered.